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Arms Buildup Dangerous

SALT II in America's Best Defense Interests

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In addition to defending the United States from attack and maintaining peace, a primary national security objective of the Carter administration — as well as of Presidents Nixon and Ford — has been to deter nuclear war with the Soviet Union.

In recent years as both nuclear superpowers have strengthened their strategic nuclear arms, the responsible leaders on both sides have become increasingly aware that a nuclear war would not only destroy their nations and cause hundreds of millions of casualties in both the Soviet Union and North America, but also would be disastrous for much of the world.

As a consequence, no sane national leader is likely to take any action that would result in even one nuclear weapon being directed at one of his nation's cities. Ten or 20 hostile nuclear explosions would be an unprecedented calamity for any modern society.

Yet the United States and the Soviet Union now maintain growing stockpiles of strategic nuclear warheads totaling over 11,500 weapons. The French, the British, the Chinese and possibly Israel and India have additional stocks of nuclear weapons, and the future of mankind remains in mortal danger.

All other issues — political, social, economic or religious — now pale to insignificance in comparison to the right of the world's people to live in safety and peace, free of the very real threat of nuclear death and destruction.

President Carter always has stated his desire to reduce, and eventually to eliminate, nuclear weapons from the world's arsenals. But the realities of international power, internal politics and the pressures of vested defense interests make modest arms controls and limited reductions of strategic weapons the only feasible objectives at this time.

Our national strategic policy seeks to maintain essential equivalence (or, rather, total equality) with the strategic power of the Soviet Union. This means that the United States must maintain sufficient strategic forces to assure the destruction of all important enemy targets. This capability must be perceived by our potential enemies and recognized by our dependent allies.

We now have such capability and have had for many years a more than adequate and realistic deterrent to any form of nuclear attack upon either the United States or our allies and friends who depend upon the shield of our strategic nuclear strength.

The United States now has a mighty, alert, highly trained and capable variety of strategic forces, armed with over 9,500 nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union has some 5,000 strategic nuclear weapons they could in turn direct at the U.S. Both nations are capable of assured destruction of each other.

In a nuclear war of any scale, despite the theories and fantasies of some strategic planners and dreamers, there would be no winner. Most responsible national officials now recognize that the time is long overdue for the nuclear powers to stop the arms race and to practice restraint and sanity in their relations.

The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty talks have been the initial and tedious steps undertaken since 1969 by the United States and the Soviet Union to limit strategic arms, as well as to enhance each nation's own national security. Both nations realize the dangers of an uncontrolled arms buildup and, at the same time, both want to be certain that they are not being placed in a position of strategic inferiority.

Secretary of Defense Harold Brown has stated: "The Soviets have as great an interest and should have as great an interest in strategic arms limitations as we do. It's in their security interests as well as ours to hold down the level of strategic arms because raising them by a notch so that they have more and we have more than we do now, will not make either of us more secure. It will make us less secure. Therefore, it's in their own self-interest to proceed with the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, and an agreement, and I have observed that they act in their own interest."

The U.S. government has developed three separate strategic systems collectively referred to as the Triad, which consists of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-based ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and heavy strategic bombers. Each system effectively serves as a deterrent to the threat of a Soviet attack.

Presently, the strategic balance between the United States and the Soviet Union is relatively stable, and it is in the security interest of both nations to maintain this stability. SALT II provides for greater stability.

The provisions of SALT do not hinge upon trust between the two superpowers. The United States can verify Soviet compliance by "national technical means" of considerable variety. We have reconnaissance satellites that can photograph the entire Soviet Union in great detail. The satellites also have radio listening devices and infrared sensors that can spot a Soviet missile test launch.

The United States also maintains an extensive net of radars, radio receivers, intelligence ships, observation aircraft and other information sources that provide a steady flow of intelligence on Soviet activities.

There is also a Standing Consultative Commission of American and Soviet experts who discuss any ambiguous information or indications of possible treaty violations by either side. Both Presidents Ford and Carter have stated there have been no significant Soviet violations of SALT I and there is no evidence to indicate that violations can go undetected. Both nations realize that obvious violations of the agreements will in effect nullify the treaty.

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